

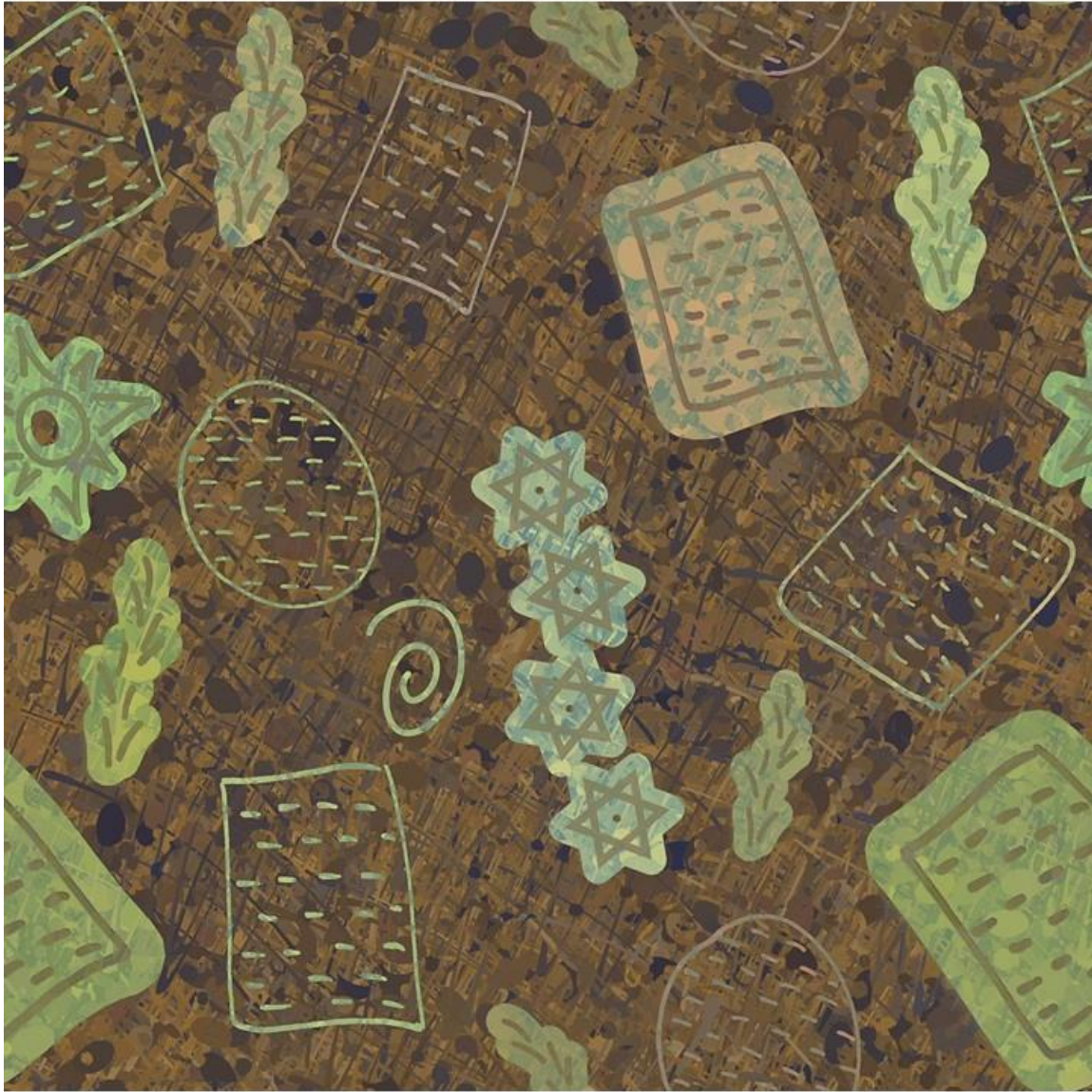


BETH  
CHAIM  
CONGREGATION

Celebrating  
Spiritual  
Community  
Since 1978

# THE STAR

VOLUME 46 | ISSUE 2 | MARCH/APRIL 2024 | ADAR I/ADAR II/NISAN 5784



*Chag Pesach Sameach*

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**NOTE:** The STAR is currently only available in digital format.

The Digital Color Edition of The Star is available online. To view/download The Star and enjoy the benefits of hyperlinks, go to the Beth Chaim website: <https://bethchaim.com/news/>.

You can also find the link to the Digital Color edition on our Members Only Facebook page and in the weekly Happenings.

Follow us on Social Media:



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## Our Mission

At Beth Chaim Congregation, we are reimagining how we experience and celebrate Judaism, and how we are a source of belonging that enriches and uplifts the lives of our members. Our approachable, flexible worship, grounded in tradition yet modernized, embraces spirituality and soulful Jewish practice.

- We welcome with warmth all who seek a connection to Jewish life regardless of their religious beliefs and experiences. We **embrace Jews of all backgrounds** as well as those new to Judaism **and interfaith relationships** and meet our congregants wherever they are on their **Jewish journey**.
- We are your Jewish **community** in the East Bay. We celebrate your simchas, and we are there with chesed in your times of need. We are your people, your community, a place to belong.
- Our **Sisterhood, Brotherhood, youth opportunities, and events** for all can fill your Jewish soul.
- **We learn.** Our Tree of Life preschool, Beit Midrash, B'nei Mitzvah program and adult education opportunities provide lifelong enrichment of your Jewish experience.
- We are a **tranquil place of togetherness** and Jewish spirituality in the beautiful Danville hills.

**Are you, or someone you know, being abused?  
If you need help, please contact:**

### SHALOM BAYIT HELP HOTLINE AND CONTACT INFORMATION

**Helpline:** (866) 742-5667 (SHALOM-7)

Toll-Free within the Bay Area

(510) 845-7233 (SAFE) outside the Bay Area

(650) 574-7233 (SAFE) Peninsula office

For questions or support, contact:

Shalom Bayit

(510) 845-8874

[communities@shalom-bayit.org](mailto:communities@shalom-bayit.org)



## COMING SOON! Events not to miss in March and April

Mark your calendar for these upcoming events. **Check the weekly Happenings and [Beth Chaim website](#) for details, to RSVP, and for updates or changes.** Also visit our website for a full listing of [Worship Services](#).

Date	Event	Day	Time	Where
MAR 1	Tot Shabbat	Friday	5:30 PM	BCC
MAR 1	Sharing Shabbat Together Ruach Service	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
MAR 2	Contra Costa Midrasha Fundraiser	Saturday	6:00 PM	Bridges Golf Club SR
MAR 3	Michael Birnbaum Memorial Service	Sunday	2:00 PM	BCC
MAR 4	Genealogy Club	Monday	7:00 PM	BCC
MAR 7	Sisterhood Monthly Walking Group	Thursday	9:30 AM	Lunardi's Parking Lot
MAR 8	Sharing Shabbat Together	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
MAR 10	Torah Tots	Sunday	10:00 AM	BCC
MAR 10	Sisterhood Hamentashen Bakeathon	Sunday	1:00 PM	BCC
MAR 12	Sisterhood Rosh Chodesh Gathering	Tuesday	7:00 PM	BCC
MAR 15	Sharing Shabbat Together	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
MAR 18	Gianni's Tips for Change Benefit Dinner	Monday	5:00 PM	Gianni's Italian Bistro
MAR 19	Sisterhood Book Club	Tuesday	7:00 PM	Home of
MAR 22	Beth Chaim Purim Celebration	Friday	5:30 PM	BCC
MAR 22	<b>PURIM</b>			
MAR 23	Avery Mann Bat Mitzvah	Saturday	10:00 AM	BCC
APR 1	Genealogy Club	Monday	7:00 PM	BCC
APR 4	Sisterhood Monthly Walking Group	Thursday	9:30 AM	Lunardi's Parking Lot
APR 6	Rachel Sorhagen Bat Mitzvah	Saturday	10:00 AM	BCC
APR 9	Sisterhood Rosh Chodesh Gathering	Tuesday	7:00 PM	BCC
APR 12	Sharing Shabbat Together	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
APR 14	Torah Tots	Sunday	10:00 AM	BCC
APR 16	Sisterhood Book Club	Tuesday	7:00 PM	TBD
APR 18	Shalom Bayit – Creating Hope Event	Thursday	6:00 PM	JCC San Francisco
APR 19	Tot Shabbat	Friday	5:30 PM	BCC
APR 19	Sharing Shabbat Together Ruach Service	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
APR 21	Interfaith EarthFest	Sunday	12:30 PM	Peace Lutheran Church
APR 22	<b>EREV PASSOVER</b>			
APR 23	<b>PASSOVER</b> through April 29			
APR 26	Sharing Shabbat Together	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC

## Ongoing Weekly Activities

Religious School	Sundays	9:15 AM	BCC
Brotherhood Hiking Group	Wednesdays	8:30 AM	
Mah Jongg	Fridays	1:00 PM	Virtual

Looking for more activities? [CCJCC Under One Tent](#) offers a calendar of offerings in the East Bay area. Click on the image for details.





## Special Events and Workshops



BETH CHAIM CONGREGATION  
DANVILLE, CA



### TIPS FOR CHANGE MONDAY MAR. 18

**BETH CHAIM RELIGIOUS  
SCHOOL FUNDRAISER at**  
*Gianni's*  
ITALIAN BISTRO

**100% OF TIPS & 10% OF FOOD/DRINK ORDERS  
GO DIRECTLY TO THE BEIT MIDRASH!**

**FOR RESERVATIONS:  
CALL 925-820-6969 OR SCAN CODE BELOW:**



Be welcomed & served by BCC Board of Directors & Members

Hosts: Rabbi Dan & Zoe Goldblatt  **The Beit Midrash at Beth Chaim**

Open for indoor dining or take-out  
2065 San Ramon Valley Blvd., San Ramon



BETH CHAIM CONGREGATION  
Celebrating Spiritual Community Since 1978

## BETH CHAIM'S PURIM PARTY

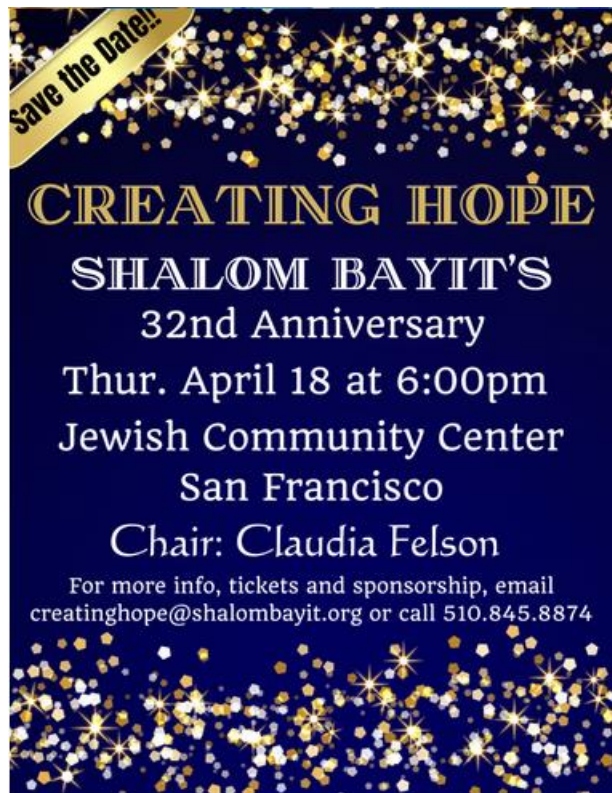
Friday, March 22 5:30pm

**FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!!!**      **PRIZES FOR BEST COSTUME!!!**

**TALENT SHOW (Scan QR code to sign up)**

**CARNIVAL GAMES**  
**PIZZA & ICE CREAM**  
**ADULT BEVERAGES**





**Save the Date!!**

## CREATING HOPE

### SHALOM BAYIT'S 32nd Anniversary

Thur. April 18 at 6:00pm  
Jewish Community Center  
San Francisco

Chair: Claudia Felson

For more info, tickets and sponsorship, email  
[creatinghope@shalombayit.org](mailto:creatinghope@shalombayit.org) or call 510.845.8874



**InterFaith EarthFest**  
See Hope - Seed Change

April 21st 12:30 - 4:30 PM  
At Peace Lutheran Church, Danville

This annual Earth Day Festival brings together the local interfaith community along with partners of civic, school, and community organizations with a common purpose: channel our collective energies to more responsibly steward our sacred planet. The entire family will enjoy fun and learning opportunities throughout the afternoon of ritual, art, music, speakers, booths, activities, and ceremony. We will spotlight our eco-success stories, draw hope from one another, and inspire ongoing local commitment to action.



I-SRV [Interfaith-San Ramon Valley]  
We are a community of diverse spiritual traditions and congregations from across the San Ramon Valley who are committed to learning, sharing, listening, and acting together  
Website: [InterfaithSRV.org](http://InterfaithSRV.org) Email: [I.SRV.events@gmail.com](mailto:I.SRV.events@gmail.com)

## Editor's Note

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by Deborah Wechsler

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Our community newsletter, the Beth Chaim Star, is published six times each year. Regular sections include:

What's Happening Next (Calendar)

President's Letter

Rabbi articles

Spiritual Life / Jewish Holidays / Lifelong Learning

Articles about recent activities pref. with photos

Membership

Sisterhood & Brotherhood

Gratitude Notes and Donations

PreK: PJ Library / Torah Tots / Tree of Life

Beit Midrash, Bnei Mitzvah, Contra Costa Midrasha

Yahrzeits

Wedding & Member Anniversaries; Kids' Birthdays

Simchas (Weddings, Births, etc)

**The deadline for submitting articles is the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding publication**, as follows:

January (1st week) for Jan/Feb issue **due Dec 20**

March 1 for Mar/Apr issue **due Feb 20**

May 1 for May/June issue **due Apr 20**

July 1 for July/August issue **due June 20**

Sept 1 for Sept/Oct issue **due Aug 20**

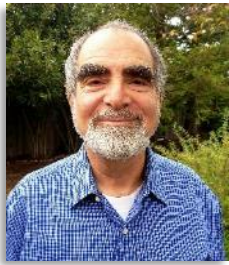
Nov 1 for Nov/Dec issue **due Oct 20**

Please contact me ([debwex52@yahoo.com](mailto:debwex52@yahoo.com)) with your thoughts and ideas for regular sections or special articles.

Looking for a way to connect your creative talents to your community at Beth Chaim? We are looking for a new or assistant editor for The Star Newsletter. Please contact Deborah ([debwex52@yahoo.com](mailto:debwex52@yahoo.com)) to find out more details.

## Rabbi Dan's Reflection – Purim Leads Us into Passover

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We rarely ever talk about the connection between Purim and Passover. On the Hebrew calendar Purim and Passover are just about a month apart, with both holidays falling on the full moon of the consecutive months of Adar and Nissan. On the

surface, these two holidays could hardly be more different. Purim is a celebration of lunacy with the text (*Megillah*) a wild fantasy – history turned on its head – with our people triumphing over the antisemites who plotted to kill us.

Passover is our central story of liberation. It is a sobering odyssey into the hardships of slavery, and the intense effort it takes to find freedom. Purim invites wild revelry, intentional inebriation, and partying into the night. Passover requires careful preparation of the ritual-filled meal, attention to the order (*seder*), and a deep, serious engagement in a foundational story of our people.

Purim precedes Passover, both on the calendar and I believe as the appropriate spiritual unfolding through the year. Purim is a time for cutting loose, loudly cursing the villain, and pushing boundaries. It is a time for catharsis, where we put on masks to remind ourselves of the masks we may have unconsciously taken on in different parts of our lives. We chant this bawdy story, become disinhibited to expose the rawness of the ego, and allow ourselves to fully feel our vulnerability in a safe, secure environment.

It occurs to me that only after we have fully given ourselves permission to act out our fantasies, can we fully embrace the notion of our enslavement. Purim invites us to let go, so that we can prepare ourselves for the more challenging work of Passover. On Purim, so much is hidden (including God, who is not mentioned in the Scroll of Esther). A connection to God is at the heart of Passover, but we must take the risks, paint our doorposts with the blood of our offerings as the tragedy of the killing of the firstborn Egyptian sons is unfolding. Liberation is hard work, and we must confront not only the worldly forces that threaten our freedom, but the Pharaoh within who often holds us back from realizing our most authentic selves.

On Purim, we are directed to laugh at ourselves, at our self-righteousness and self-aggrandizement, and dance in joyful exhilaration as the jester or the clown. After this emotional purging, we can sit across the table from loved ones, look them in the eye, and speak our truths about what it feels like to be the “other” and how we can find new ways to a more authentic life.

This year, we gather as a community to embrace the absurdity of life, and ready ourselves to gather in our homes one month later to harvest the possibility of a new, more liberated awareness.

*Chag Sameach!*



## Celebrating Neela – A Tribute to Over Twelve Years of Dedication

By Rae Corr



In the heart of every thriving community, there are individuals who quietly but profoundly shape the landscape of their surroundings. In our case one of these individuals is Neela Arumugham, our

Bookkeeper and Office Administrator, whose unwavering dedication has graced the office of Beth Chaim Congregation for over twelve years.

Neela's journey with Beth Chaim began in late 2011 when she was hired as our bookkeeper, and from the very start it was evident that her presence would go far beyond the bookkeeping position. Her job skills, paired with her innate kindness and sharp intellect, quickly made her an indispensable asset to our congregation.

Neela's role at Beth Chaim has been multifaceted, spanning various responsibilities, yet she approached each task with enthusiasm and attention to detail. Whether it was managing administrative duties with precision, sorting through financial details, coordinating events with finesse, or lending a compassionate ear to those in need, Neela's contributions are nothing short of exceptional. She is well-known for identifying solutions before many of us were even aware of a challenge or problem.

Her tireless work ethic is matched only by her genuine compassion and innate wisdom, making her not just an invaluable colleague but a cherished friend to all who have had the privilege of working alongside her.

Neela's impact extended far beyond the confines of her job description. As we reflect on Neela's over twelve years of service, we're reminded of the legacy she leaves behind, her dedication, her kindness, and her unwavering commitment to excellence! Through Beth Chaim's ups and downs, she has always remained a steadfast presence, embodying the resilience and strength that defines our congregation.

Neela's intelligence and quick wit are matched only by her humility, as she never sought recognition for her countless contributions. Instead, she quietly went about her work, content with the knowledge that she was making a difference in our congregation.

As we reflect on Neela's time with Beth Chaim, we are filled with gratitude for the countless ways in which she has enriched our community. Neela's tenure at Beth Chaim has taught us the true meaning of loyalty and community. In an age where rapid change is the only constant, Neela's steadfast presence has been a source of stability and reassurance.

Neela has now chosen to begin a new chapter in her life, and although we are sad to see her go, we want to take this opportunity to express our deepest appreciation for her years of service. Neela, you have been more than just an employee—you have been a cherished member of our Beth Chaim family, and your presence will be deeply missed.

We appreciate your offer to be available for special occasions and events, and with open arms we look forward to welcoming you back any time. In the meantime, we wish you all the happiness and success in the world, knowing that wherever life takes you, your light will continue to shine bright. Thank you, Neela!



# YOU Are My Hardest Goodbye

By Neela Arumugham

It has been a little more than 12 years since I started my job here at BCC (I would like to think of it as one year for each tribe!!). It was a Monday morning that I saw the help wanted sign when I came to drop my son off at Sycamore Elementary School. I had just taken a break from my auditing job so I could spend more time with my son. For the first time, I could sign up for all the volunteering spots at school, could host play dates and sleepovers on weekdays, could be the carpool mom and do countless other mommy/son bonding activities. Though this brought me great joy, I was missing work and my calculator!

One day I saw a “Bookkeeper wanted” sign as I was driving up the hill for school drop off. I rushed home to research Beth Chaim. I thought initially that it was a church as the word “congregation” was all that I apparently digested and the Star on the logo was obviously invisible to me!! The synagogue bit threw me off. My only exposure to Judaism was thru *The Fiddler on the Roof*, *The Ten Commandments* & *Ben-Hur*!! (by the way, there was a time I knew the lyrics to all the songs in the Fiddler on the Roof!!). I knew enough about the Bible to think I could pass a Church interview, but I was lacking in my knowledge about Judaism.

I thought I'd take a chance and called from the school parking lot and was asked to come in for an interview immediately. I rushed home and only had time to change into my business clothes before coming back. I did not even have a resume printed out! I met with Deborah Wechsler, and I loved how energetic and passionate she was about BCC (and she was not getting paid to be so!!). I gave my interview and left but had no hopes of getting the job as I was not Jewish. I was surprised to get a call two days later asking if I wanted the job. The pay was peanuts, but the rewards were plenty – I could give back to the community as well as earn some good karma by working in a religious organization.

The first week, I borrowed some books from the BCC library to do a crash course on Judaism. Pleasant surprise – I did know something as I studied in a Catholic school, had Catholic friends and had been to church services. What I did not know was how connected Judaism was with other religions. Working here has definitely made me more curious about the different religions. I like to read and find similarities. Gives me hope that someday the world will be free of strife. After all, isn't loving everyone equivalent to loving God? Isn't helping one another equivalent to doing God's work? In the big picture, I like to think of us all as one family, all lending a helping hand wherever needed. Lifting spirits and healing souls. I truly believe that there can be no greater joy than in helping a person in need. Which is why I love the Hebrew word, 'give', *natan* which is a palindrome; a word that is spelled the same way forward and backwards. When you give someone help of any kind, it gives you as much happiness.

In my years here, I have worked with different board members and volunteers. It continues to amaze me when I see the number of hours that they put in at BCC. I know of Board members who rush to BCC at 2am when the alarm goes off (with just their denim bullet proof vest!) , who take calls while on vacation, who educate themselves on solar panels and the sprinkler system just so they can help, who bake/cook for hours to feed the community, who head committees to manage events, who pause their dinner to become tech support for the Rabbi, who assemble the masses when volunteers are needed and also those who find us funds when we sorely need it. There is no handout from any affiliation which is why I have a very high respect for the member community here as their financial contributions is solely what props our doors open. There can be no other greater act of L'dor V'dor than our BCC parents bearing the cost of Beth Chaim for their children. I hope the children recognize and acknowledge it someday.

...Continued next page

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I absolutely loved my time here at BCC. I know so much more about Jewish culture, practice and festivals and I learn more every day. I loved taking the quizzes in the STAR (when we had them) and it was a special kind of joy when I could answer a Jewish related question! Best was my dad calling me in the middle of the night from India asking me what “Tzedakah” was!! If I can impact a little bit of knowledge to another, I can feel that my life was not wasted. I was bestowed a “Hin-Jew” title by one of our members and I will proudly carry it for the rest of my days!

My otherwise boring bookkeeping life was spruced up now and then with dealings with gophers, mice, snakes, squirrels and skunks (sometimes it did feel like Noah’s Ark had anchored at our gate!!). I enjoyed helping out at the Gala, Golf Tournament and High Holy Days as this was the only time I got to meet the members and their families. I will miss setting up each Friday for Shabbat. It was with great reverence that I would get the challah, candles and kiddush cup ready for Rabbi Dan. It took a minute of my time, but it meant more than anything I have ever done.

I especially loved interacting with the seniors as I have always missed my parents and it gave me great joy to spread some cheer while talking to them (and being their tech support!). I have listened to a lot of their stories and will miss those the most. Working in a religious office has been surreal – no one yells or even frowns here, Rabbi hugs are the perks and lunch with the Rabbi is a definite bonus. I will definitely miss everyone who orbited BCC and helped make my life a bit more interesting.

It is with a heavy heart that I am leaving this post, but I would like to take a break and try out some different paths in my life’s journey. BCC will always hold a special space in my heart, and I will continue being connected with all the people who have come to mean so much to me.

*L'hitraot (until we see each other again)*

Neela Arumugham

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## Welcome to our New Office Administrator – Leki Nunn

by Deborah Wechsler

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We are pleased to introduce our new Office Administrator, Leki Nunn. Leki has a combination of technical education, experience and skills that will contribute to successful management of our communications and facilities oversight tasks in the office. In addition to this he is a welcoming presence for our membership, guests and visitors. Neela has been working with Leki during the last two weeks of February to familiarize him with our processes, and we are excited to have him on board!

Please stop by the office to introduce yourself during his work hours M-F, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm.





### JEWISH COMMUNITY RESOURCE COUNCIL RESOURCES:

Take action now using one of our [campaigns](#)!

### EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES:

#### K - 12:

- [JCRC Guidance for Jewish Parents Organizing](#)
- [Talking to Children About Violence in Israel](#)
- [How to Talk to Children About Israel Today \(video\)](#)
- [Support for Classroom Discussion on the Hamas-Israel War](#)

#### Higher Education:

- [Sample University Community Letter](#)
- [Campus Antisemitism Legal Line \(CALL\)](#)
- [14 facts about hamas every college student needs to know](#)
- [Facts every college student needs to know about Israel](#)

## Chavurot at Beth Chaim Congregation

We currently have over 100 members connected through four active Chavurah groups. If you are looking to join a Chavurah group, please contact Debbie Roof at [debbie.roof@yahoo.com](mailto:debbie.roof@yahoo.com)



\**chavurah* - a small group of friends who get together to socialize, celebrate and have fun. Joining a *chavurah* enriches your experience as members of Beth Chaim, through meaningful relationships and positive connections.



## Nine Things You Did Not Know About Passover

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Excerpted from [MyJewishLearning.com](http://MyJewishLearning.com)

Passover celebrates the ancient Exodus of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. Here are nine things you might not have known about this major Jewish festival.

### 1) In Gibraltar, There's Dust in the Haroset.

The traditional haroset is a sweet Passover paste whose texture is meant as a reminder of the mortar the enslaved Jews used to build in ancient Egypt. The name itself is related to the Hebrew word for clay. In Ashkenazi tradition, it is made from crushed nuts, apples and sweet red wine, while Sephardi Jews use figs or dates. But [the Jews in Gibraltar] take the brick symbolism to another level, using the dust of actual bricks in their recipe.

### 2) Abraham Lincoln Died During Passover.

The 16th American president was shot at Ford's Theatre on a Friday, April 14, 1865, which coincided with the fourth night of Passover. The next morning, Jews who wouldn't normally have attended services on the holiday were so moved by Lincoln's passing they made their way to synagogues, where the normally celebratory Passover services were instead marked by acts of mourning and the singing of Yom Kippur hymns. American Jews were so affected by the president's death that Congregation Shearith Israel in New York recited the prayer for the dead — usually said only for Jews — on Lincoln's behalf.

### 3) Arizona Is a Hub for Matzah Wheat.

Hasidic Jews from Brooklyn have been increasingly sourcing wheat for their Passover matzah from farmers in Arizona. Excessive moisture in wheat kernels can result in fermentation, rendering the harvest unsuitable for Passover use. But rain is scarce in Arizona, which allows for a stricter standard of matzah production. Rabbis from New York travel to Arizona in the days leading up to the harvest, where they inspect the grains meticulously to ensure they are cut at the precise moisture levels.

### 4) At the Seder, Persian Jews Whip Each Other with Scallions.

Many of the Passover seder rituals are intended to recreate the sensory experience of Egyptian slavery, from the eating of bitter herbs and matzah to the dipping of greenery in saltwater, which symbolizes the tears shed by the oppressed Israelites. Some Jews from Iran and Afghanistan have the tradition of whipping each other with green onions before the singing of "Dayenu."

### 5) Karaite Jews Skip the Wine.

Karaite Jews reject rabbinic Judaism, observing only laws detailed in the Torah. Which is why they don't drink the traditional four cups of wine at the seder. Wine is fermented, and fermented foods are prohibited on Passover, so they drink fruit juice instead. (Mainstream Jews hold that only fermented grains are prohibited.) The Karaites also eschew other staples of the traditional seder, including the seder plate, the *afikomen*, and *charoset*. Their *maror* (bitter herbs) are a mixture of lemon peel, bitter lettuce and an assortment of other herbs.

### 6) Israeli Jews Have Only One Seder.

Israeli Jews observe only one Passover seder, unlike everywhere else where traditionally two seders are held, one on each of the first two nights of the holiday. Known as *yom tov sheni shel galuyot* — literally "the second festival day of the Diaspora" — the practice was begun 2,000 years ago when Jews were informed of the start of a new lunar month only after it had been confirmed by witnesses in Jerusalem. Because Jewish communities outside of Israel were often delayed in learning the news, they consequently couldn't be sure precisely which day festivals were meant to be observed. As a result, the practice of observing two seder days was instituted just to be sure.

### 7) You're Wrong About the Orange on the Seder Plate.

Some progressive Jews have adopted the practice of including an orange on the seder plate as a symbol of inclusion of gays, lesbians and other groups marginalized in the Jewish community. The story goes that the practice was instituted by the feminist scholar Susannah Heschel after she was told that a woman belongs on the synagogue bimah, or prayer podium, like an orange belongs on a seder plate. But according to Heschel, that story is false. In that apocryphal version, she said, "a woman's words are attributed to a man, and the affirmation of lesbians and gay men is erased. Isn't that precisely what's happened over the centuries to women's ideas?"

*Continued on next page...*

## 8) “Afikomen” Isn’t Hebrew.

For many seder attendees, the highlight of the meal is the afikomen — a broken piece of matzah that the seder leader hides and that the children in attendance search for; the person who finds the afikomen usually gets a small reward. Most scholars believe the word “*afikomen*” derives from the Greek word for dessert. Others say it refers to a kind of post-meal revelry common among the Greeks. Either theory would explain why the afikomen is traditionally the last thing eaten at the seder.

## 9) For North African Jews, After Passover Comes Mimouna.

Most people are eager for a break from holiday meals when the eight-day Passover holiday concludes. But for the Jews of North Africa, the holiday’s end is the perfect time for another feast, Mimouna, marking the beginning of spring. Celebrated after nightfall on the last day of Passover, Mimouna is marked by a large spread of foods and the opening of homes to guests. The celebration is often laden with symbolism, including fish for fertility and golden rings for wealth.

## Shlissel Challah – A Passover Tradition

*What?? Bread for Pesach?? Read on for the Why, (When) and How!*

By Shannon Sarna, MyJewishLearning.com

A few years ago I started noticing a trend on Facebook and Instagram: key-shaped loaves of challah baked the Shabbat **after** Passover. As I scrolled and read and researched, I came to learn that this trend has a name: *shlissel* challah, or key challah. Shlissel originates from the German word for key: *shlüssel*.

But this practice may not be a Jewish one. It has pagan and - gasp - Christian origins, according to several sources. The reason for shaping challah like a key? The original practice was to actually bake a key inside the challah, not dissimilar to the tradition of King Cake enjoyed during Mardi Gras when a tiny plastic baby, representing baby Jesus, is baked into a sweet cake. It is considered good luck to be the one who gets the baby in their piece of cake.

But the Jewish reason for baking a shlissel challah is for a “*segulah for Parnassah*,” or an omen for good fortune. Translation: Bake a shlissel challah after Passover in the hopes of secure financial status for your family.

The tradition of baking a shlissel challah dates back many hundreds of years and is a more well-known custom in religious communities. But with the advent of

social media, especially challah bakers’ popularity on Instagram, the tradition has caught on well beyond Orthodox Jewish circles.



If you do a quick search for #shlisselchallah on Instagram, you will discover thousands of posts. In a recent discussion on the “Kveller Moms” Facebook group, many Jewish women shared that while they aren’t religious, they like participating in this tradition for a variety of reasons: They already love baking challah and this is a fun challenge; some say it makes them feel connected to others; or they simply use the opportunity to share challah with their friends and family as an act of lovingkindness. We could all use a little bit of that, right?

Of course, like most things in Judaism, not everybody agrees. I personally find it a bit at odds with Judaism to wish and pray for specific things like financial success, and to do so by baking a special challah — I’m more used to relying on our actions to reap good fortune. And I’m not the only one who feels uncomfortable with the practice. In this piece by Noam Sienna in *The Forward*, he shares:

It’s true that some rabbis opposed (and still oppose) the custom of *shlisl khale* as a meaningless superstition, possibly even derived from non-Jewish custom. (Many European traditions serve an elaborate Easter bread around this time of year, commonly marked with a cross.) Others decry the practice of hoping for a *segulah* (omen) to open the gates of *parnasa* instead of working for it ourselves.

But Sienna goes on to write why the practice is meaningful for her. “I’m putting a key on my challah this Shabbat to remind myself of that moment, that first communal moment where we stopped waiting for bread to fall from the skies and started making it ourselves — and perhaps to remind myself that the keys to those gates may be in my hands.”

---

## The Best Challah Recipe Ever!

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*This is the challah recipe everyone at Beth Chaim has been asking about since Chanukah, when Evan Levy supplied some for our holiday greeting treats for our members. Our Master Challah Baker Debbie Roof said she now uses this recipe! Evan said the recipe has been in their family since it was given as part of a wedding gift 32 years ago. The recipe makes one large loaf or two small loaves of challah.*

---

### Ingredients:

1 packet quick rising yeast  
1 cup water  
1/2 cup Sugar  
3 cups unbleached flour (plus extra for adding in)  
3/4 tsp salt  
3 egg yolks  
3 1/2 TBSP Olive oil  
1 whole egg

Use water that is approx. 115° F (Too cool will not rise the yeast and too hot will kill it. It feels like really warm bath water.) Add 1 TBSP sugar and then sprinkle yeast packet over the top. Mix together and set aside to foam up. (If yeast doesn't foam it is not activated.)

In a medium size bowl, mix together: flour, salt, remaining sugar (1/4 Cup plus 2 TBSP). Create a pit in the center of flour mixture and pour in yolks, oil and yeast mixture.

Start to mix together starting from center gradually moving outward and incorporating all the flour mixture.

Once the flour is almost all incorporated, turn out onto a floured surface and knead, incorporating flour until dough is not sticky. Put dough in an oiled bowl covered with a wet towel in an oven that is pre-warmed to 150° (Make sure oven is turned off before putting dough in.) Let rise for one hour. (Do not overrise. You could choose instead to make the dough the night before and rise overnight in the refrigerator.)



Take the dough out, punch down, knead for a couple minutes and let rise again for one hour. NOTE: Second rise cannot be done in refrigerator. Take dough out, punch down and knead for a few minutes. Separate out a small piece and ball up in square of tin foil to be baked with Challah (This is actually the "Challah". There is a prayer at this point: *Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav vetzivanu l'hafrish Challah.*)

Separate the remaining dough into six equal parts, create ropes, braid and place on a baking sheet covered with parchment paper. Let rise for 1/2 hour in a 150° oven. (Make sure oven is turned off when you put Challah in.)

Take Challah out and pre-heat oven to 350°. While oven is heating whisk together 1 egg and a splash of water and brush over top of Challah being careful not to puncture the dough. Bake Challah for 30 minutes (but take out after 15 minutes to re-brush with egg wash). If Challah starts to get too brown, tent some tin foil over the top to keep from burning. ENJOY!



## Spiritual Life

by Larry Candeub, Director Religious Affairs/Spiritual Life



Please feel free to contact me, Larry Candeub, [Bccreligiousaffairs@gmail.com](mailto:Bccreligiousaffairs@gmail.com) with ANY thoughts you have about this, or things you would like to see in the upcoming months ...it's all about serving our community.

### Purim is Coming! Purim is Coming!

Our Beth Chaim tradition is to celebrate Purim with food, drink, laughter and fun.

For a number of years, we have held separate functions for adults and children. This year we are back to a community event with a good time promised for all.

We will start at 5:30 pm on Friday March 22nd with a carnival atmosphere including a number of **carnival games**, pizza, **ax throwing**, basketball and even a **bouncy house**. Additionally, there will be **hamantaschen** provided by our Sisterhood, **adult beverages** sponsored by Brotherhood, and a **sundae bar**. It will be very difficult to not find something that will bring you joy.

Costumes are not required, but always add a level of fun and joy. There will be prizes for the best costumes, for both children and adults.

Additionally, we will once again share our unique talents during the **"Beth Chaim's Got Talent"** Show. Skits, spiels, singing, dancing, or anything that you consider your "talent" will be appreciated. Space for the talent show is limited, so sign up as soon as possible. You can contact me and look for a link in an upcoming flier.

We look forward to sharing this very special evening with you and your family!



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## Modeh Ani – “I Am Grateful”

*“Appreciation is a wonderful thing: It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.”- Voltaire*

In this section of The Star we call attention to people in our community who have gone above and beyond to help us thrive. Say *Toda Raba* to someone using the link below!

**Debbie Roof and Judith Markowitz** – for their efforts to secure grants for Beth Chaim Congregation to enhance our safety and security. Thanks for your expertise and dedication to make these grants possible for our community!

**Larry Candeub** – For his tireless energy on generating and implementing ideas for engaging the spiritual energy of Beth Chaim Congregation members.

**Lara Groch** – Gratitude for the PJ Learning Library and all associated efforts to renew our programming for families with young children.

### Express your Gratitude!

We would like to recognize Beth Chaim members who have “stepped up”, or “given back” to our Beth Chaim community. As this is a community recognition, we would like the community to recommend members that are deserving of this honor.

Please take a moment to let us know who we should recognize. It’s easy. Just use the link below to nominate someone you think deserves to be noticed for their contribution to our community.

I AM GRATEFUL FOR [LINK](#)

## Interfaith EarthFest

April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024 12:30 – 4:30 PM

### 2nd Annual EarthFest Celebration

Fun & Learning for the Entire Family!

Ritual • Art • Music • Activities • Speakers • Booths

Plan to join the fun at Peace Lutheran Church to spotlight our eco-success stories, draw hope from one another, and inspire ongoing local commitment to action. All peoples are invited to this

collaborative community celebration of Baha'i, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Sufi, Hindu, Taoist, and Christian friends, with acknowledgement to our Indigenous relations. Learn more at [interfaithSRV.org](https://interfaithSRV.org).

We love volunteers! Sign up [here](#) for a variety of ways to express your care for our environment.

### EarthFest Art Exhibit 2024 - Call for Artists

Interfaith of the San Ramon Valley (I-SRV) is now accepting 2D and 3D artwork from artists in the greater Bay Area for an exhibit at Peace Lutheran Church. Works should represent a connection to the grandeur of our Earth, with an emphasis on caring for and stewardship of our natural environment. The entry request and an image of the proposed artwork should be submitted to Deborah Wechsler ([Deborah.wechsler@gmail.com](mailto:Deborah.wechsler@gmail.com)) by March 28, 2024. The exhibit opening will be on the day of the EarthFest event, April 21, 2024. Click [here](#) for more details.

**Be sure to check out the art exhibit currently hanging in the Beth Chaim Sanctuary!** The art on display is from the EarthFest 2023 exhibit. Compelling creations by many artists in our Interfaith Community are on display, including some from The Reutlinger, Peace Lutheran Church, and by our own Beth Chaim member Joy Severin, among others.



InterFaith  
EarthFest  
See Hope - Seed Change

## Membership

"... Community - in the fullest sense: a place and all its creatures - is the smallest unit of health" – Wendell Berry

### Our Newest, Youngest Member!

by Debbie Roof, Director, Membership



A warm welcome to our newest, youngest member. On February 4, 2024, our newest, youngest member of Beth Chaim was born 2 months early: Skye Margaret Azicri! Here is more information about her family, who joined Beth Chaim in 2021:

**Beth Chaim:** Tell us about your new baby girl, Skye Margaret Azicri:

**Debbie:** On Sat. night, Feb. 3, I started having contractions, nine weeks early. I called Kaiser and they said I could wait until the morning to come in. We dropped off our two boys at Sunday School at Beth Chaim and went to Kaiser in Walnut Creek. It turned out I was having a rare, very serious complication, and had to deliver the baby later that night. We had to arrange for someone else to pick up the boys from Sunday School.

Our baby girl was not due until 4-2-24, and instead she was born on 2-4-24, which was the same birthday of her great-great-grandmother, born 130 years earlier. Skye was the first girl born on either my side or my husband's side of the family in 40 years, so in the Jewish tradition, there were a lot of Jewish women we wanted to honor with her name. The S for Skye is named for Shirley, who was my husband's grandmother.

Her middle name, Margaret, is a combination of Mar for Marianne, my grandmother, and Gretel, my great-grandmother who was born 130 years earlier. Gretel's husband was an OB-Gyn in Germany before WWII, who owned his own hospital. He was known for delivering many babies who would have been denied medical care and discriminated against because of their ethnicity. He and Gretel had to escape Nazi Germany before WWII. They came to Texas, where he restarted his medical practice. We are proud to name our daughter after Shirley, Marianne, and Gretel, three important women in our lineage.

Skye weighed 3 pounds 6 ounces when she was born and was only 14 inches long. She is meeting all of her milestones, and is very healthy, just very small. (Skye was still in the hospital when this interview occurred on 2-21-24).



To help out the Azicri family with meals, please contact Kim Thompson, our Beth Chaim Chesed Director, at [hazelfast@yahoo.com](mailto:hazelfast@yahoo.com), or sign up on MealTrain [here](#). With a three-pound baby in the NICU, and Debbie healing from emergency surgery, the Azicri family have a lot on their plates right now, which is why it's up to our Beth Chaim community to literally help them fill up their plates! We can't wait to meet our newest, youngest member at Beth Chaim, Skye Margaret Azicri.

**Beth Chaim:** Tell us about the rest of your family:

**Debbie:** It's me, my husband Jason, and our 2 boys. Blake just turned 11, and is in 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Greenbrook, and in the Beth Chaim Hebrew School. His class is just now getting dates for his upcoming Bar Mitzvah. Dax just turned seven and is in first grade at Greenbrook and in the Beth Chaim religious school.

*...continued next page*



Both boys are very into sports. Blake plays indoor soccer, and both Blake and Dax play basketball, baseball and flag football. Both boys are in scouts. Blake also plays saxophone in the band. They both love going to the movies. When we travel as a family, it is usually to visit Jason's relatives on the East Coast, in Miami or Georgia.

**Beth Chaim:** Where did you both grow up?

**Debbie:** My husband Jason grew up in Miami. He went to University of Central Florida, then to Santa Clara University for graduate school. He studied psychology and got his MFT license. He is now a mental health therapist and case manager for Kaiser in Antioch.

I grew up in Castro Valley, then went to Foothill High School in Pleasanton. I attended UC Berkeley, then Stanford for graduate school. I got a master's degree in education specializing in Learning Design and Technology, and made award-winning children's educational videos. For eight years I worked at Square Panda, an Educational Technology company. Last October I started working at Adobe as a Senior Product Marketing Manager. I work on products that Adobe can market for use in the classroom, like PhotoShop, etc.

**Beth Chaim:** How did you two meet?

**Debbie:** Jason and I met in LA, when we were both working in the TV industry. He was a screen writer on a road trip from Florida, staying with his friend when we met. We had mutual friends - our childhood friends had met on Craig's List and were roommates. Later we both went to graduate school in the Bay Area. We worked together on Adina's Deck, a film series about internet safety and cyberbullying. We wrote, directed and produced the series together, which started as my master's thesis at Stanford, then got funding to create two more episodes. The name Skye is special to us, because we created Skye as a main character in Adina's Deck.

We were living in San Ramon in our 20's and wanted to get married at a Jewish temple. We weren't members anywhere and were looking for a separate location to have the wedding reception. We loved the Beth Chaim sanctuary, and thought it was just so beautiful. They were very accommodating and allowed us to rent Beth Chaim for both the wedding ceremony and reception. We had Rabbi Asher marry us because his father had married my parents. We have been married since June 2010 – it's been almost 14 years now!

**Beth Chaim:** Tell us about your Jewish education, etc.:

**Debbie:** We both had Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. Jason was raised conservative, and I was raised reform. We both had very different Jewish experiences growing up. Miami has a much bigger Jewish population than in the Bay Area. Everyone in Jason's area was Jewish. At my temple in Castro Valley, I was the only girl having a Bat Mitzvah that year. In the Bay Area we find we have to seek out a Jewish community. Lara Groch helped us become part of a Jewish community with her PJ Library events, Torah Tots, etc.

**Beth Chaim:** How did you choose Beth Chaim?

**Debbie:** We moved from Pleasanton to Danville in 2021. We let our son Blake try out several Sunday Schools, and Beth Chaim was his favorite Sunday School. He had good reasons for liking Beth Chaim – he felt really comfortable, and he liked that his class was not too big or too small. We wanted him to have a good Jewish experience here in Danville, so we also wanted to choose Beth Chaim. Dax was younger, so we used to go to Torah Tots, Tot Shabbat, etc. as a whole family. Dax really liked it, too. He started in the kindergarten Sunday School before he was even in Kindergarten at Greenbrook. Now he is in first grade with Lara Groch as his Sunday School teacher. We also like attending the Young Family Chavurah events. We look forward to selecting a Bar Mitzvah date for Blake at Beth Chaim!

### *How do I get a Beth Chaim Membership Directory?*

Did you know that Beth Chaim has a Membership Directory? You can find contact information for your Beth Chaim friends! Available only to members, take the following steps to access the directory:

1. Go to the Beth Chaim website home page <https://www.bethchaim.com/>
2. **Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on "MEMBERS ONLY"**
3. Click on "Member access only" button. You will have View Only access to the Membership Directory and other information for members. The Directory is updated regularly.
4. Any member with a gmail-associated account will have access to materials on the Members Only Google folder. If you do not have a gmail-associated account please contact the office.

## Children's Birthdays

Name	Birthday	Age	Name	Birthday	Age
Meghan Simpson	March 2	9	Noah Cohen	April 11	16
Danielle Abelman	March 3	16	Madelyn Kozak	April 13	18
Mathew Kuritz	March 5	13	Abby Shapiro	April 15	13
Kami Rosenblatt	March 6	18	Jaxson Doughtie	April 15	7
Harlow Heiden	March 9	14	Brayden Rosenblatt	April 19	14
Morgan Sacks	March 12	17	Cassidy Rosenblatt	April 19	14
Averie Bleier	March 19	18	Ethan Binder	April 20	15
Braxton Rhodes	March 28	12	Sara Eisenberg	April 22	9
Jacob Gracer	March 28	17	Eli Cohen	April 22	14
Serena Guzman	March 31	8	Judah Ostomel	April 24	6
Leonardo Dublin	April 4	15	Ethan Karatov	April 25	17
Meyer Hanlon	April 5	5	Sahana Campbell	April 26	6
Avery Mann	April 6	13	Kyla Cohen	April 26	18
Lev Frank Manansala	April 7	7	Sierra Langberg	April 27	5
Ariel Goldshteyn	April 9	12	Alice Welch	April 29	13
Kalea Thompson	April 10	17	Cora Welch	April 29	13
Parker Abramowitz	April 11	17			

## Wedding Anniversaries

Names	Date	Years	Names	Date	Years
David & Cindy Watkin	March 3	12	Elliot Campbell & Lavanya Ramadoss	March 25	12
Julia & Dave Abelman	March 5	19	Jon Bronstein & Christa Joseph	March 30	37
Mark Garetz & Ellen Rosenbluth	March 7	14	Steve & KT Waxman	April 5	43
Peter & Vickie Eiges	March 9	33	Deborah Wechsler & Bruce Bilodeau	April 11	32
Lara Groch & Jeremy Wall	March 14	9	Leonard & Joanne Becker	April 25	37
James Sorhagen & Jean Lee	March 19	19	Stephanie & Mark Abramowitz	April 27	21
Erin & Andy Sacks	March 20	20	Elaine & Herb Lederman	April 29	62
Sam & Debbie Ferman	March 23	49			

## Membership Anniversaries

Names	Years	Names	Years
Scott & Catherine Heller	24	Adam & Elizabeth Leftik	4
Barb Carpenter	23	Jeffrey Mueller	4
Bobby & Linda Carp	22	Ray & Susan Cherry	2
Lois Kamoroff	20	Stephen & Robin Rodman	1
Kenneth & Marija Bleier	11	Josh & Tiffani Doughtie	1
Jeffrey & Rhona Shulman	9		

## Generosity

*"It's not how much or how little you have that makes you great or small, but how much or how little you accomplish with what you have."* - Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch

**GIVING FUNDS | Building Fund | Community Fund | Religious School Fund |**

**Rabbi's Discretionary Fund | Torah Restoration & Sacred Objects**

If you would like to make a donation you now can do so online using this [link](#). Every effort is made to individually acknowledge each donation by letter. If a donation is made in memory of someone, the family is notified and if a donation is made to honor someone he or she is notified as well. The generous support of the synagogue made by member and non-member contributions is very much appreciated. Donations are listed by the donor's name followed by the honoree's name.

### **Community / General Fund**

Harry & Laurel Slomowitz	In memory of my father John, my mother Mila and my brother, Edward
Rick Ferber	
Greg Druckman	In memory of David Messing
Barry & Laura Denenberg	To honor all of the women who participated in the B'not Mitzvah
Rhoda Messing & Mark Rutter	In loving memory of Rhoda's son, David Messing
Robert & Debra Cowen	In honor of the 2023 B'not Mitzvah Class
Knights of Pythias	
Linda Ahern	In memory of our beloved brother-in-law David Messing and to honor the anniversary of Pam & Dave
Bruce & Carol Rosenbaum	
Marci Jo Piccus	In memory of David Messing
Annouk Van De Voorde & Casitas De Castilian	In memory of David Messing
Lois Kamoroff	In memory of Bonnie Adelson
Deborah Wechsler & Bruce Bilodeau	In memory of Mike Birnbaum
Deborah Wechsler & Bruce Bilodeau	In memory of Bonnie Adelson
Barry & Laura Denenberg	In memory of Bonnie Adelson
Lois Kamoroff	In memory of Mike Birnbaum
Larry & Barbara Candeub	In memory of David Messing
Larry & Barbara Candeub	In memory of Bonnie Adelson
Larry & Barbara Candeub	In memory of Mike Birnbaum
Larry & Barbara Candeub	In memory of Brenda Diane Harker, step-mother of Rabbi Jamie Hyams
Carlos & Grace Munoz	In memory of Mike Birnbaum
Barry & Laura Denenberg	In memory of Mike Birnbaum



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Do you shop at Draeger's or Lunardi's? Here is a fundraising opportunity to keep Beth Chaim Congregation going strong! It's easy to help our Beit Midrash! Simply visit [escrip.com/wheretoeearn](https://escrip.com/wheretoeearn) and get signed up with any of our participating merchants, including local stores Draeger's and Lunardi's.



# Sisterhood

by Lois Kamoroff and Suzie Homer, Sisterhood Co-Presidents



In January the Sisterhood came together for the Sisterhood Kickoff Luncheon, coordinated by Vikki Alpert and Jane Ware. Sisters got a chance to enjoy an afternoon full of food and fun as the new Sisterhood officers were welcomed. One outcome of this event is that the Sisterhood is developing our own Facebook page – stay tuned!

On February 2 the Sisterhood coordinated the Shabbat service and the Oneg. Many thanks to Rabbi Jamie Hyams who led the service, assisted by Deborah Wechsler and Denise Zavaleta. It was an intimate, beautiful evening.

March is HAMENTASCHEN baking month and we need help! We have been asked to make 450 hamantaschen for the Purim party!! Look for the volunteer sign-up and complete instructions on making dough in the Sister-to-Sister newsletter and weekly Happenings, or contact Jackie Darvill at [jackiedarvill@gmail.com](mailto:jackiedarvill@gmail.com)

Sisterhood would like to bring your attention to a special event sponsored by Shalom Bayit, the Bay Area's center for domestic violence prevention and response within the Jewish community. The event will take place at the San Francisco JCC **April 18 at 6 pm**. A very special thanks to Sandi Morris, who has dedicated countless volunteer hours to Shalom Bayit and is currently a member of the Board of Directors.

We also have continued our monthly events: Walking Club coordinated by Lois Kamoroff, Rosh Chodesh Gathering coordinated by Deborah Wechsler, and Book Club and Ladies Who Lunch, coordinated by Sandi Morris.

Remember to pay your Sisterhood dues, \$40, for our new year. Dues are used to support the Congregation with traditional Sisterhood sponsored programs, Bat/Bar Mitzvah Candlesticks and our new synagogue texting application.

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## Social Action | Tikkun Olam

*"If there is anxiety in a man's mind, let him quash and transform it into joy with encouragement."* ([Proverbs 12:25](#))

by Naomi Ehrlich, Director, Tikkun Olam



Beth Chaim Congregation and St. Timothy's Episcopal Church co-hosted Winter Nights Shelter at St. Timothy's Parish Hall, January 15, 2024-January 29, 2024, providing shelter, food and other aid to several families who would

otherwise be unhoused. Thank you to Winter Night Shelter meal team volunteers! The families appreciated the wonderful meals and childcare/tutoring help from all of the teams: Kim & Michael Thompson, the Heidens, Marc Feder and Elliot & Lavanya Campbell & your girls (best childcare helpers!), Patricia Harley Slomowitz and chef Scot and Linda (unbelievable gourmet dinner), Deborah Wechsler, Grace Gilbert Munoz, Benjamin & Shelley Fox, Sima, Neela Arumugham and Ellen Waltrip, Vikki & Robert Alpert, Sandi Morris, Sara Goldstein, Janice Frankel, Evan & Stacey Levy, Adam, Sam, Sheridan, & Lynden Pennell, Erin, Andy, and Morgan Sacks, Sue Friedman, Kelly & Adam Holden, Aurelia & David Lubinsky and Lisa Gross! And, our new BCC families who helped with childcare: The Levine Family and Haley & Sierra Langberg! Also a huge thank you to Michelle and Tony Erlick, Jake Ehrlich, & Rae Corr who helped with setup, and to all of our volunteers that dropped off food donations. It truly takes a village!



### Passover Food Drive 2024



Again this year, JFCS is asking Beth Chaim Congregation to purchase boxes of tea for the 150 food bags that the agency fills each year. The agency will be dropping the bags off with the Jewish elders in the East Bay who either cannot afford to purchase the Passover items or are homebound.

Look for a signup soon for this important mitzvah. We are one of only two East Bay synagogues that participate in this special project with the Jewish Family and Community Services of the East Bay.

Boxes of tea should be dropped off before April 12, 2023 at the Beth Chaim office. There will be a box set aside for the tea. If for whatever reason it is difficult to drop off at BCC, please let me know and I can make other arrangements.

Please contact me with any questions:

[jomaja3@aol.com](mailto:jomaja3@aol.com)

or

925-890-3875

### Help Manage Our Waste – Tikkun Olam Starts at Home!



**Here are a few housekeeping tips for the next time you are here for an event:**

1. Use the right disposal bins. We will have new signs for extra guidance.

2. Minimize usage of disposable items. Think before you reach for that paper or plastic item.
3. Try to stack your used plates and cups BEFORE throwing them in the trash. Stacked items occupy less space and we will save on waste overage costs.



# Brotherhood

by Burt Feldstein



Beth Chaim  
Brotherhood

What We Do Together Matters

Thanks to Arie Cohen, Brotherhood Board Member and Beth Chaim President, for organizing and setting up the first post-Covid Brotherhood Winter Getaway in South Lake Tahoe February 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup>. Seventeen men enjoyed skiing and schmoozing at the newly refurbished Margaritaville Hotel.



The weekend included a Shabbat service, very nice dinners, a Torah of Your Life gathering, and a Man of the Year celebration. Rabbi Dan was the unanimous choice of all former Men of the Year recipients. His contributions to the Brotherhood over these past 30 years as its spiritual leader, friend, power hitter on the BCC softball team, are key reasons the Brotherhood meant so much to so many men over the years.



*Rabbi Dan: The Man, The Myth, The Legend*

The Annual Brotherhood Super Bowl Pool sold out 100 squares in record time. There were nine winners with each win paying \$346.92. Four of the nine winners were double winners and received \$692.30.


Brotherhood sponsored a wonderful Friday Night Shabbat Love Service on February 16<sup>th</sup>. Rabbi Dan and Zoe led this love-filled service where couples exchanged notes of love. The service was followed by an Oneg filled with all kinds of exquisite chocolate treats provided by Brotherhood. All those who attended or watched this service online experienced a wonderful post-Valentine's Day treat.



*Raising a glass to Dave Messing at his favorite spot*


## Education

*T'lamed Ve'Tilamed (You shall teach and you shall learn)*



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LEARNING CENTER**

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Tree of Life Learning Center welcomes and celebrates children from all backgrounds and works with families to ensure that all family traditions are respected and valued.


If you or someone you know has an interest in the wonderful opportunity the preschool offers to children, please contact Kelley Cohen at [kelleycohen@treeoflifelarningcenter.com](mailto:kelleycohen@treeoflifelarningcenter.com) or 925-285-5005.

Tree of Life Learning Center is a private, family-owned, developmentally based Jewish preschool, offering full-day, part-day, and school-day programs for children ages 2 – 5 years-old.



Director: Kelley Cohen

[Kelleycohen@treeoflifelarningcenter.com](mailto:kelleycohen@treeoflifelarningcenter.com)

## *Torah Tots and Tot Shabbat*



Join PJ Library Parent Connector **Ema Lara** and music leader Tkiya at Beth Chaim Congregation. For anyone with little ones ages 0-5!



### Torah Tots

Sundays  
10:00am

**March 10**

**April 14**



### Tot Shabbat

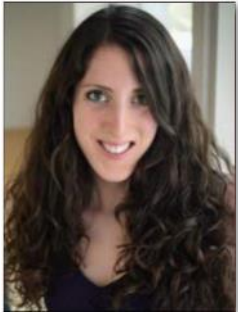
Fridays  
5:30pm

**March 1**

**April 19**







Shelby Margolin  
Principal, Beit Midrash

During the month of March, the Beit Midrash gets to celebrate our community in extra special ways. On **Friday March 1st**, we'll honor our third graders by presenting them with their very own siddurim at our Ruach service. The third grade marks an important shift in children's learning: they begin to study Hebrew midweek in addition to Sunday School. This signifies an increased focus on preparing for their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Rabbi Dan invites the families to offer their child a special blessing and it is always an incredibly tender and moving ceremony. This is also our pajama themed Ruach services – including a community breakfast-for-dinner – so children of all grades will have a fun time!

On **Monday March 18th**, we are inviting our entire Beth Chaim community to join us at Gianni's Italian Bistro for a night of good food, great company, and the opportunity to be served by Beth Chaim members! 100% of all tips and 10% of all food/drink orders benefit the Beit Midrash. With our influx of new students, we need to hire more teachers and increase our special activities budget to ensure families will continue to be attracted to our thriving program. By simply eating some delicious food and seeing some Beth Chaim friends, you can help us make our holiday celebrations more exciting, thereby attracting new members to Beth Chaim. I hope to see you there!

Speaking of holiday celebrations, we are so excited to bring back a **Purim favorite: Beth Chaim's Got Talent on Friday, March 22!** The Beit Midrash has once again teamed up with Religious Affairs to put on a Purim extravaganza complete with carnival games, pizza, ice cream, adult beverages, and a talent show featuring our very own Beth Chaim members. We are looking for a mix of adult and child performances, so please consider sharing your talent with us!

March also marks the start of our B'nei Mitzvah season. Avery Mann will kick things off on Saturday, March 23 at 10am. Our Mishpacha groups have been talking about what it means to become a Bar and Bat Mitzvah and we're excited to wrap our love and support around each of our 7th graders!

I hope to see all of you at these meaningful celebrations.

Kol Tuv,

**Morah Shelby Meyer Margolin (she/her/hers)**  
Principal, Beth Chaim Beit Midrash  
Beth Chaim Beit Midrash  
[educator@bethchaim.com](mailto:educator@bethchaim.com)

## B'nei Mitzvah

### Siman Tov u'Mazal Tov!

Wishing our B'nei Mitzvah success, happiness, friendship, health, and adventure. We're very proud of their accomplishments and we look forward to celebrating many simchas as they grow into adulthood.



#### Avery Mann – March 23

Avery is currently a seventh grader at Stone Valley Middle School. She has one older brother, Jacob, who was a Bar Mitzvah at Beth Chaim in November of 2022. She is a great student and loves playing sports whenever possible. In 2023, she won several singles tennis tournaments, and her soccer team reached the NorCal State Cup quarterfinals in the Gold Division. She also loves spending time with her friends, whether roaming around Alamo Plaza or grinding some Fortnite on the weekends. She is incredibly grateful to Morah Ellen for making Torah and prayer learnings fun. She also enjoyed her time with Rabbi Dan to reflect on topics that are truly important. She is honored and excited to kick off the B'nai Mitzvah class of 2024!



#### Rachel Sorhagen – April 6

Rachel is a seventh grader at Pine Valley Middle School where she particularly enjoys French and Math. With an older sister Isabelle and twin younger brothers Noah and Liam she comes from a house always in motion. A strong and caring personality, Rachel knows what she wants and does not hesitate to advocate on her own behalf. She is a driven individual and gives little hesitation when it comes to talking to people and challenging what she disagrees with. A committed scout she enjoys camping and hiking and has earned a number of Eagle Scout required merit badges. In her quiet times, when not playing board or video games, she enjoys crocheting, sewing, cooking and baking.

A thank you from Rachel to her teachers during this intense process: Rabbi Dan, Morah Ellen, and Morah Sam.

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Contra Costa Midrasha functions as Beth Chaim's teen program, and Beth Chaim makes an annual per student contribution to augment the tuition and retreat fees of Midrasha.

## Grades 8-12

By Devra C. Aarons, Executive Director, CCM

### Contra Costa Midrasha's 2024 Spring Update

This Spring is chock full of exciting opportunities for the whole community to learn about and with Contra Costa Midrasha! Join us to be part of these exciting opportunities:

**ONE: Celebrate the next 36 years of Contra Costa Midrasha at our annual Gala on March 2nd.** This year we will dance the night away, enjoy amazing wine and food and bid on exciting items. Join us or donate in honor of our work crafting Jewish belonging and Jewish identity with our community's Jewish teens at [www.ccmidrasha.com/gala](http://www.ccmidrasha.com/gala)



**TWO: Learn about the teen brain on March 20th, with Professor Kendall Cotton Bronk.** Claremont Graduate University College professor Kendall Cotton Bronk to share about "The Science of Purpose." The event will be free, in person and open to all adults who want to learn more about this burgeoning field. RSVP at <https://bit.ly/TeenBrainMarch20>



Devra Aarons,  
CCM Director

**THREE: Our Spring Retreat happens April 12-14.** All Jewish teens in our community are welcome! Join us for a weekend in nature, amidst the redwood trees - celebrating Shabbat together. RSVP @ [https://www.flipcause.com/secure/cause\\_pdetails/MjAO MDE2](https://www.flipcause.com/secure/cause_pdetails/MjAO MDE2)

**Finally save the date for May 22nd when our magnificent Class of 2024 will graduate. You won't want to miss their stories and insights!**

As always, spread the love about Contra Costa Midrasha! Let the teens in your life know about Midrasha and our myriad of programs. Schedule a time to talk with our Director, [Devra Aarons](mailto:Devra Aarons) or check out our website at [ccmidrasha.com](http://ccmidrasha.com). There's something for every teen and enrollment is always open!



Contra Costa Midrasha's "Teen Brain Series" invites parents and community members to:

### CULTIVATING PURPOSE IN ADOLESCENTS

March 20, 2024 - 7:15pm  
Walnut Creek, CA

Professor Bronk, Ph.D., is the Principal Investigator for the Adolescent Moral Development Lab and a Professor of Psychology in the Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the Claremont Graduate University. She is a developmental scientist interested in studying and promoting positive youth development and the moral growth of young people. Most recently, she has investigated these topics through the lens of young people's purposes in life.



Kendall Cotton Bronk  
Claremont Graduate University

Event is FREE, RSVP is Required @ [bit.ly/TeenBrainMarch20](https://bit.ly/TeenBrainMarch20)



Made possible by a grant from Sinai and Synapses' "Scientists in Synagogues"

## Yahrzeits

### Zichronam L'vracha – May Their Memories be a Blessing

Name	Date	Observed By	Relationship
Myron Kulwin	Mar 1	Harry Kulwin	Father of Harry
Karen Finder	Mar 2	Scott Finder	Mother of Scott
Felicia Lubinsky	Mar 3	David Lubinsky	Mother of David
Shirley Braun	Mar 5	Neil Bernstein	Mother of Neil
David Benveniste	Mar 6	Daniel Benveniste	Brother of Daniel
Joe Yarkin	Mar 7	Mark Yarkin	Father of Mark
Albert Temmins	Mar 10	Amy Millington	Father of Amy
Sidney Fishman	Mar 11	Martin Fishman	Father of Martin
Marcia Rae Angelo	Mar 12	Brien Angelo	Mother of Brien
Mary Zimmerman	Mar 12	Leslie Diamond	Mother of Leslie
Bob Wiener	Mar 13	Greg Wiener	Father of Greg
Anne Golman	Mar 16	Janet Lieber	Mother of Janet
Joshua Benveniste	Mar 17	Daniel Benveniste	Father of Daniel
Helen Kamoroff	Mar 21	Lois Kamoroff	Mother-in-Law
Gladys Weitzner	Mar 23	Heidi Levine	Mother of Heidi
Robert Reitzes	Mar 24	Jeff Reitzes	Father of Jeff
Julius Ehrlich	Mar 24	Scott Ehrlich	Father of Scott
Jacqueline Carter	Mar 24	Tim Carter	Sister of Tim
Barbara Fagelson	Mar 25	Stacey Levy	Mother of Stacey
Jeanne Elvidge	Mar 27	Barbra Candeub	Mother of Barbra
Barbara Becker	Mar 29	Jeff Becker, Leonard Becker	Mother of Jeff and Leonard
Elsie Carter	Mar 30	Tim Carter	Mother of Tim
Gary Edward Engelman	Mar 31	Linda Engelman	Brother of Linda
Howard Schneider	Apr 1	Mindy Murphy	Father of Mindy
Norman Rosenkoff	Apr 1	Lois Kamoroff	Father of Lois
Walter Thompson	Apr 2	Michael Thompson	Father of Michael
Sondra Candeub	Apr 2	Larry Candeub	Mother of Larry
Kevin Kelley	Apr 2	Kathie Bleier	Brother of Kathie
Shane Yotter	Apr 3	Ellen Severson	Son of Ellen Severson and Steve Yotter
Grace Dublin	Apr 3	Andrew Dublin	Mother of Andrew Dublin
Lee Sandor	Apr 4	Janet Freiman	Mother of Janet
Norman Binger	Apr 4	Lynn Binger	Husband of Lynn
Michael Schumow	Apr 4	Keren Carter	Brother of Keren
Ralph Bleier	Apr 5	Kathie Bleier, Kelley Cohen, Kenneth Bleier, Jason Bleier	Husband of Kathie; Father of Kelley, Ken & Jason
Franklin Saul	Apr 6	Frederick Saul	Father of Frederick
Joyce Weckstein	Apr 6	Lou Weckstein	Mother of Lou
Rudy Ryan	Apr 7	Rob Kadesh	Step-father of Rob
Rhoda Freiman	Apr 7	Harold Freiman	Mother of Harold
Jack Sarver	Apr 7	Diane Sarver-Davidson	Father of Diane
Ileane Mizes	Apr 8	Jim Mizes	Mother of Jim
Donald Samson	Apr 9	Glenn Samson	Father of Glenn
Shirley Leavitt	Apr 9	Debbie Roof	Mother of Debbie



## Yahrzeits, cont'd

### Zichronam L'vracha – May Their Memories be a Blessing

Name	Date	Observed By	Relationship
John Benson	Apr 10	Heidi Stagg	Father of Heidi
Bruce Cohen	Apr 11	Susan Friedman	Brother of Sue
Harriet Becker	Apr 12	Shelley Fox	Mother of Shelley
Ralph Carmen	Apr 13	Andrea Stewart	Father of Andrea
June Netter	Apr 13	Robert Jay Netter	Mother of Robert Netter
Frieda Fishman	Apr 15	Martin Fishman	Mother of Martin
Charles Pruzansky	Apr 15	Susan Volsky	Father of Susan
Ilse Mueller	Apr 15	Jeffrey Mueller	Mother of Jeffrey
Ruth Novak	Apr 17	Sandy Shalon	Mother of Sandy
Sam Silver	Apr 17	Lisa Ruderman	Father of Lisa
Bernard Brown	Apr 21	Jane Ware	Father of Jane
Kenneth Jordan Levy	Apr 22	Evan Levy	Father of Evan
Mark Friedman	Apr 22	Susan Friedman	Husband of Sue
Bernard Goodman	Apr 24	Elaine Lederman	Father of Elaine
Paul Scott	Apr 24	Larry Scott	Father of Larry
Charles Birnbaum	Apr 24	Michael Birnbaum	Father of Michael
Arnold Kaplan	Apr 26	Sheila Kaplan	Husband of Sheila
Harvey Mizes	Apr 27	Jim Mizes	Father of Jim
Phillip Goldstein	Apr 28	John Goldstein	Father of John
Ida Portnoy	Apr 29	Joy Severin	Mother of Joy
Sharon Book	Apr 30	Ira Book	Wife of Rabbi Ira Book



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## Marketplace

Classified ads are free for Beth Chaim members. There is a nominal annual charge of \$30 for a seven-line insertion for non-members. If you would like to place an ad, call the Beth Chaim office at 925-736-7146, or send an email to [admin@bethchaim.com](mailto:admin@bethchaim.com).

The inclusion of any advertisement in this publication — including classifieds — or reference to any product, process, service, trade name, trademark, or manufacturer, is not an endorsement by Beth Chaim Congregation of any such advertisers, entities, persons, products, services, names or marks.

**CERTIFIED BARTON READING AND SPELLING TUTOR.** Nine years' experience. Certified at a Masters Level. Have worked and improved the reading and spelling skills of 1st to 8th graders (but the program is beneficial for anyone over the age of 5). If your child is struggling with reading and spelling and traditional phonics programs are not helping, Barton may be the answer. Don't wait until your child falls further behind. Contact Pam Messing at 925.548.5307 or [pjmessing@hotmail.com](mailto:pjmessing@hotmail.com). References available upon request.

**BINGER DATAMANAGEMENT GROUP LLC.** We provide efficient and effective ways to analyze, track and report data. We offer a wide range of services from simple ways to slice and dice data using spreadsheets to the development of robust business intelligence systems. Scott C Binger Founder and CEO (646) 389-2364, [scottb@bingergroup.com](mailto:scottb@bingergroup.com).

**BAR/BAT MITZVAH VIDEOGRAPHER.** Recent graduate of the Art Institute of San Francisco Brian Hanlon is partnering with his wife and longtime BCC member and Hebrew School teacher Samantha Waxman to record your service or party. Contact us at [samanthabhanlon@gmail.com](mailto:samanthabhanlon@gmail.com) or [hanlon86@yahoo.com](mailto:hanlon86@yahoo.com).

**ACTIVITY THERAPIST.** Do you have a loved one living with MCI, or Alzheimer's or other dementia? Do you have a loved one living with a terminal diagnosis? We provide 1 to 1 ongoing support for people in need in Contra Costa County. 10+ years experience connecting with elders through music, art, spiritual care, emotional support and help with end-of-life planning. Contact Z\*O\*E Activity Therapies (510) 926-4329, [zoe@activitytherapies.org](mailto:zoe@activitytherapies.org); [www.activitytherapies.org](http://www.activitytherapies.org).

**"SPECIAL FOR SHABBAT"** is written by long time professional writer and Beth Chaim member, Michelle Gabriel. The book follows the story of a little girl who finds meaning in Shabbat and challah when she discovers the beauty of both, especially for the challah that was baked special for Shabbat. A sweet story with engaging illustrations for young children. [mjgwrites@yahoo.com](mailto:mjgwrites@yahoo.com) or [mjgpress.com](http://mjgpress.com)



**"ARI'S JOURNEY"** a novel by late Beth Chaim member Norman Binger, is now available on Amazon.com, including as a Kindle book. Ari Cohen, an Israeli Police officer, embarks on a perilous journey to save his son from terrorists. On his odyssey he meets friends and enemies, both Palestinian and Israeli, and encounters a long-lost love.

**MEMORY ALBUMS.** Do you need help organizing your photos? Would you like to preserve your family memories so they can be passed on to your children and their children? Whether it's baby's first year, B'nei Mitzvah, graduation, weddings, special vacations, and more, I can preserve these memories for you or teach you how to do it. Call Melinda Bandler on 829-0782, or e-mail [mhandler@pacbell.net](mailto:mhandler@pacbell.net), for a free 1-hour consultation.

**CUSTOM QUILTS.** One-of-a kind gifts of Jewish art. Great for B'nei Mitzvah graduation, anniversary, and wedding gifts. A letter of the Aleph Bet or Star of David quilted wall hanging, blanket, or chuppah that will last from generation to generation. Examples of each can be seen at BCC or my art studio. Choose your favorite colors or I can help you decide. Letters are \$324 for 28" x 31." Stars are \$486 approx. 55" x 59". \$54 will be donated to BCC for each piece purchased. Contact Barb Carpenter via email: [RenaZimmermanDesigns@gmail.com](mailto:RenaZimmermanDesigns@gmail.com) or 925-838-8371. <http://www.renazimmermandesigns.com>.

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